

NSC BRIEFING

DRAFT
27 April 1954SOVIET JET BOMBERS

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Sightings of aircraft in May Day rehearsal flights near Moscow between 18 and 25 April indicate the development of new Soviet jet bombers and will assure well-populated foreign embassy roofs on May Day, in the hope that the display during the air parade will reveal further details. Initial sightings on 18 April led temporarily to the belief that nine heavy jet bombers, probably Type 37's, had been observed in formation flight. That same day, other observers saw a single Type 37 in flight, an observation which was repeated on 19, 22 and 25 April. On 19 and 25 April, observers also noted flights of six and eleven hitherto unidentified jet medium bombers of a type similar in appearance to the US B-47.

DIA, USAF and DOS review(s) completed.

The existence of a new medium bomber in as many as eleven examples (which would place it well beyond the prototype stage) would be an important ^{*intelligence item,*} ~~discovery~~, considerably advancing present estimates, ^{*(of the Soviet production schedule.)*} The existence

of as many as nine Type 37's, which now appears extremely doubtful, would force an urgent review of the estimated Soviet heavy jet bomber production program.

B. Present estimates have anticipated series production of Soviet jet medium bombers^{1/} this year, with 50* in operational use by mid-1955 and 325 by the end of 1957. Series production of jet heavy bombers^{2/} has not been expected before sometime in 1956, with 20* reaching operational units in 1957. Since the eventual introduction of heavy jets will significantly improve Soviet capabilities for attack on the United States (MAP), any advance in the estimated date on which this type will be available in operational units of the Long Range Air Force would equivalently reduce the present US margin of superiority in intercontinental bombing capabilities.

II. The Soviet strategic air arm

A. During World War II, the performance of the Soviet Long Range Air Force was an unqualified failure by western

1/ "Medium" - radius: more than 1,000 nautical miles, less than 2,500 nautical miles.

2/ "Heavy" - radius: 2,500 nautical miles or more.

* New figures as of 15 March provided by USAF. The figure "20" for jet heavy bombers is in lieu of the previous USAF wording, "a few," used in SNIE 11-2-54.

standards. Although nominally independent in status, it functioned in tactical support of ground armies with rare exceptions (among them, raids on populated centers of Finland in 1944 with the objective of accelerating peace negotiations).

B. Following acquisition of the B-29 in late 1944 and a major reorganization in 1946, the Soviet Long Range Air Force was converted into what we consider to be a medium bomber force. Equipment of this force with TU-4 (i.e. B-29 type) aircraft is believed to have been completed or nearly completed by mid-1953. Today, the Soviet Union has two Long Range Air Armies in the Western USSR, one in the Soviet Far East and over 1,000 medium bombers.

C. In training and equipment, the Long Range Air Force is estimated to have reached a level comparable to that attained by US strategic air forces at the end of World

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War II.

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III. The Soviet strategic bomber development program

A. As of January 1954, no medium or heavy jet bomber was known to be in series production in the Soviet Union. The existence of a program to develop new types for the Long Range Air Force, however, was strongly indicated not only by the logic of such a requirement and the example of Soviet fighter and tactical bomber reequipment programs, but also by sightings of possible prototypes, [REDACTED]

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B. [REDACTED] the development of aircraft types in each of the following categories:

1. heavy - turbo-propeller powered. (Prototype seen in fly-by - Type 31).

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2. heavy - jet powered.

3. medium - jet powered.

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a. Heavy turbo-prop bomber

The sighting of a four-engined bomber (christened Type 31 by western observers) at the July 1951 Air Show provided firm evidence of Soviet developmental interest in heavy bombers. Current estimates assume that aircraft of the Type 31 class are equipped with turbo-prop engines. The combat radius of such a bomber with a 10,000 pound* bomb load would vary from 2,500 to 3,000 nautical miles depending on the turbo-prop engine used.

b. Heavy jet bomber

A sighting in mid-1953, again at Ramenskoye, revealed an aircraft of about the same size as the

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[redacted]

Type 31 but with an appearance similar to the US B-47. This sighting was taken to indicate Soviet development of a prototype jet in the heavy or near-heavy bomber class and the plane was designated the Type 37.

It is estimated that such a Soviet plane would be available in units in late 1957. With a 10,000 pound bomb load, it would have a radius of 2,500 nautical miles, a range of 4,800 nautical miles and a speed of 450 knots at 40,000 feet.

c. Medium jet bomber.

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[redacted]

construction of a swept-wing jet aircraft 91 feet long (half again the length of the IL-28).

Flight testing of this medium jet, [redacted]

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[redacted] reportedly took place at an airfield near Moscow in 1952 and early 1953.

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It is estimated that a Soviet jet medium bomber will be available in limited numbers during 1955. With a 10,000 pound bomb load, the medium jet is expected to have a radius of 1,500 nautical miles, a range of 2,900 nautical miles and a speed of 500 knots at 30,000 feet.

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V. Significance of parade sightings.

A. On past May Day and October Revolution Day fly-bys, the USSR has shown only types then available in operational units. For example, on May Day 1950, the IL-28 was shown for the first time, when a formation of 24 was observed--a number indicating quantity production. In contrast, at Aviation Day air shows, in July or August, demonstrations include both aircraft in quantity production and prototypes, some of which may never be seen again.

VI. Background-particulars of April 1954 observations:

A. At 3:45 on the afternoon of 18 April, three American service attachés at the embassy saw 24 IL-28 jet light bombers and one large jet

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bomber flying along the regular parade route.

They agreed that the large plane was in all

probability a Type 37. Fifteen minutes earlier,

a Foreign Service Officer [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] saw a large

formation which included 42 IL-28's and nine

large jet bombers, which he said were "three

times the size" of the IL-28's. The Foreign

Service Officer thought the latter aircraft

"looked like" US B-52's. On viewing a picture

of a Type 37, however, he agreed that the nine

he saw were probably Type 37's.

B. At 2:30 on the afternoon of the following day,

the American air attaché and two air force sergeants

observed and photographed a single type 37 at a

distance of one mile. At twice the distance,

these observers saw another formation, including

six unidentified swept-wing jet medium bombers.

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The weather on 19 April was

hazy and the US air attaché reported that photographs of the new jet mediums were "extremely poor."

C. At 1030 on the morning of 22 April, a single type 37 accompanied by many IL-28s, was again observed from the Embassy roof at a distance of 2 miles.

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E. COMMENT;

The US Air Attaché in Moscow comments that apparently only one Type 37 has been observed to date and that the planes seen by the Foreign Service Officer on 18 April, and subsequently reported as probable Type 37s, are fairly certain to be the same jet medium bombers seen on 19 and 25 April.

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